

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Please cancel claims 16 and 19 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please amend claims 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, and 18 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A spark plug comprising:

a metal shell;

a center electrode retained in said metal shell and insulated from said metal shell;

~~said center electrode having a body portion made of a first material and a tip portion made of a second material different from the first material, wherein the tip portion is connected to an end of the body portion by a welding material; and~~

a ground electrode opposed to said center electrode to define a spark gap between said ground electrode and said center electrode, said ground electrode being ~~joined~~ connected to said metal shell through a laser fused weld ~~fused by one of a laser welding material and an arc welding material.~~

2. (Currently Amended) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein the whole of said ground electrode is made of an ~~Iridium~~ alloy and connected at an end thereof directly ~~by a welding material~~ through the laser fused weld to said metal shell.

3. (Previously Presented) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein a depth of the weld between said ground electrode and said metal shell is about 0.3 mm to 1.5 mm.

4. (Original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein said metal shell is made of an Fe-base alloy containing one of 0.15% by weight or less of S, 0.35% by weight or less of Si, 0.25% by weight or less of C, 1.5% by weight or less of Mn, and 0.1% by weight or less of P.

5. (Original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein said metal shell is made of an Fe-base alloy containing 0.15% by weight or less of S, 0.35% by weight or less of Si, 0.25% by weight or less of C, 1.5% by weight or less of Mn, and 0.1% by weight or less of P.

6. (Original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein said ground electrode is made of an alloy containing a main component of 50 Wt % or more of Pt and an additive of at least one of Rh, Ir, Os, Ni, W, Pd, and Ru.

7. (Original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein said ground electrode is made of an alloy containing a main component of 50 Wt % or more of Ir and an additive of at least one of Rh, Pt, Os, Ni, W, Pd, and Ru.

8. (Currently Amended) A spark plug comprising:

a metal shell;

a center electrode retained in said metal shell and insulated from said metal shell, ~~said center electrode having a body portion made of a first material and a tip portion made of a second material different from the first material, wherein the tip portion is connected to an end of the body portion by a welding material; and~~

a ground electrode opposed to said center electrode to define a spark gap between said ground electrode and said center electrode, said ground electrode being all made of an Ir alloy including a main component of 50 Wt% or more of Ir and ~~joined~~ connected directly to said metal shell.

9. (Currently Amended) A spark plug as set forth in claim 8, wherein said ground electrode is joined to said metal shell through a laser fused weld ~~by a laser welding material~~.

10. (Previously Presented) A spark plug as set forth in claim 9, wherein a depth of the weld between said ground electrode and said metal shell is about 0.3 mm to 1.5 mm.

11. (Original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 8, wherein said metal shell is made of an Fe-base alloy containing one of 0.15% by weight or less of S, 0.35% by weight or less of Si, 0.25% by weight or less of C, 1.5% by weight or less of Mn, and 0.1% by weight or less of P.

12. (Original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 8, wherein said metal shell is made of an Fe-base alloy containing 0.15% by weight or less of S, 0.35% by weight or less of Si, 0.25% by weight or less of C, 1.5% by weight or less of Mn, and 0.1% by weight or less of P.

13. (Original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 8, wherein said ground electrode is made of an alloy containing a main component of 50 Wt % or more of Ir and an additive of at least one of Rh, Pt, Os, Ni, W, Pd, and Ru.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein the tip portion of the center electrode ~~includes~~ is made of an Ir alloy ~~chip~~.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein the tip portion of the center electrode is made of a Pt alloy.

18. (Currently Amended) A spark plug as set forth in claim 8, wherein the tip portion of the center electrode ~~includes~~ is made of an Ir alloy ~~chip~~.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously Presented) A spark plug as set forth in claim 8, wherein the tip portion of the center electrode is made of a Pt alloy.

21. (Previously Presented) A spark plug as set forth in claim 8, wherein the ground electrode is L-shaped.